

Revolt in Hungary

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It seems a pity that recent activities in Hungary have distracted many from a clear recognition of the semantic niceties at issue. Happily, the entire world, with the sole exceptions of Russia and Hungary, realized all along that it was no more than a war of words.

Those of us with a proper respect for the nuances of language were simply enchanted with Ambassador Lodge's last-minute substitution of the word "condemns" for "deplores" in describing Russia's slaughtering of Hungarian civilians. Only the Hungarians, doggedly attacking Russian tanks with small arms, failed to appreciate the devastating effect of that verbal bombshell.

And what a masterpiece was the United States resolution calling on the Russians to withdraw all troops from Hungary! The fact that there was not the remotest likelihood of compliance puzzled many who missed the vital point that those were words for the sake of words. Certainly the Hungarian grandmother, mourning her dead husband and sons, could not understand this subtlety; it is too deep for the peasant mentality.

That ignorant woman had probably never even heard of Roberts' Rules of Order and so could not derive your true connoisseur's satisfaction from the request that representatives be named "to investigate the situation and make recommendations." How splendidly that rings! The words are just right!

All in all it has been a glorious victory for our side. We have proved to the Russians beyond the shadow of a doubt that we will deter aggression with every phrase we can muster. The Russians, knowing that they are no match for us oratorically, do not even try to compete. Instead, when faced with a formidable situation in Egypt, they merely let it be known that they will arm

the Arabs and send in "volunteer" troops of their own. This readiness to resort to violence testifies to a regrettable weakness of character and shows that they are not really in command of the situation. Our magnificent self-control, which enables us to stand by while a small nation is systematically bludgeoned to death, shines all the brighter by comparison.

The facts are unpleasant, but we must face them and admit that the Hungarians have been guilty of lamentable gaucherie. They listened to Radio Free Europe; they read the pamphlets our balloons showered on them; they paid attention to our repeated protestations that all nations should be free, that enslaved nations should rise up and put down the tyrants. The awful shame is that they took all this seriously and expected that words would be backed up by action. They should have known that this was all just a word game.

Therefore, when they are bombed and shot down, when their dead bodies are used as public ornaments, when their military leaders are perfidiously seized, and when their government is liquidated and their officials murdered, they have only themselves to blame. The fault lies in their deplorable tactlessness in confusing words with the things they stand for.

We have always known that the pen is mightier than the sword. Now we know also that the airy heights of rhetoric are more comfortable than the brink of war. If only the Hungarians had grasped this simple fact and called for words rather than arms! Their expectations would then have been brilliantly realized and they need not have felt betrayed and deserted in their time of desperate need.

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